

HEALTHY CHURCH DYNAMICS | *Antioch*

INTRO:

THE CHURCH IN ANTIOCH WAS A PURPOSE FILLED CHURCH:

- Where everyone shared the gospel
- Where everyone was generous
- Where everyone used their gifts

Acts 13:1-4 ESV

¹ Now there were in the church at Antioch prophets and teachers, Barnabas, Simeon who was called Niger, Lucius of Cyrene, Manaen a lifelong friend of Herod the tetrarch, and Saul. ² While they were worshiping the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit said, "Set apart for me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them." ³ Then after fasting and praying they laid their hands on them and sent them off. ⁴ So, being sent out by the Holy Spirit, they went down to Seleucia, and from there they sailed to Cyprus.

THE CHURCH IN ANTIOCH WAS A HEALTHY CHURCH SEEN IN SEVERAL OF ITS DYNAMICS

- That MINISTERED to the Lord
- That was LED BY THE SPIRIT
- That SENT out leaders and ministers

MINISTERED TO THE LORD

V2A: While they were worshiping the Lord and fasting,

*The word for worship [λειτουργέω] here is literally = to serve religiously or to minister or perform religious duties

- λειτουργέω | It becomes the root word for our english word 'liturgy' and the concepts associated.
- λειτουργέω comes from the words "public" and "work"
- In the Septuagint (Gk OT) it is used for the religious ministry tasks of the priests

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- It comes to include Christian service to God through prayer, teaching and good works

ONE OF THE CHURCH'S PRIMARY FUNCTIONS IS TO MINISTER UNTO THE LORD

- People often come to the Lord in order to receive from Him
 - But that often happens as we minister to the Lord
- What do we mean by that (minister to the Lord)?
 - Religious duties from a pure heart
 - Bless, magnify, and give him honor
 - Worship
 - Obedience
- Church (services) should be just as much about coming together to bless God and honor Him as it is to seek His help, comfort, and aid.
 - Consider: when we come together, do we think this way OR do we exclusively come in order to receive?
 - That's why it shouldn't matter if all your preferences get met... because the primary reason we're here is to love and honor God.
- As a pastor
 - My aim ought to be to please God in how I minister to his people
 - This requires me (and every pastor) to say what God wants, not what the people or culture wants to hear.
 - "Hide behind His word"
 - Unfortunately, there are ministers who prioritize the feelings and opinions of people above the heart and desires of the Lord.
 - Ultimately that behavior thinks that they are better at ministering to people than the Lord.
- We want to be in right alignment with the Lord when we gather.
 - Primary aim is to bless and please God
 - Secondary is to bless and serve one another.

PRAYER AND FASTING ARE INCLUDED IN THIS

- Part of those 'religious duties' from a pure heart.

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- FASTING:
 - Jesus teaches us 'when we fast' we are to not draw attention to our fasting. Essentially saying that we are to fast unto the Lord and not to be seen by people.
 - Notice he says "when" you fast.
 - That implies that we do it!
- PRAYER:
 - Thanksgiving, supplication, requests, intercession, repentance, confession, praise
 - Corporate AND individual prayer are important when we gather.

IN DISCUSSING IT'S HEART TO MINISTER TO THE LORD, WE SEE THAT THE CHURCH IN ANTIOCH HAD ITS PRIORITIES STRAIGHT.

LED BY THE SPIRIT

V2B: the Holy Spirit said, "Set apart for me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them."

NOTICE: THE CHURCH IN ANTIOCH WAS SENSITIVE TO AND LISTENED FOR THE VOICE OF THE HOLY SPIRIT.

- I don't think it's coincidental that during times of devotion, worship, prayer and fasting that they HEARD the voice of the Spirit.
- We believe God still speaks today.
 - Through His Word
 - Through His Spirit
 - Through His people
- IF you want to hear the voice of the Lord—seek Him!
- The church was able to hear his voice, not just its individual members
 - Maybe it came through a prophetic word (likely)
 - Then the church had to weigh out the message and discern its source.

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- Upon doing so, they could say that the whole church 'heard' the voice of the Spirit.

THE RESULT OF ALL THIS IS THAT THE CHURCH WAS LED BY THE SPIRIT

- What follows aren't just the ideas of its leaders, but rather the will of God
- We want to be a church that:
 - Honors God and ministers to Him
 - Listens to His voice and seeks to follow His plan in each season.
- There is a confidence, hope, and peace that comes from knowing that you are following His plans.
 - You don't have to have it all figured out
 - Success isn't merely an agreeable external outcome, but rather its in something you can control... faithfulness and obedience.
 - We don't have to see and know the future to have peace and success... we just need to walk with the One who does.

THE MESSAGE WAS TO SET APART BARNABAS AND SAUL FOR THE LORD'S WORK

- The church didn't call the leaders, God did
- The church recognized God's work and purpose for them and set them apart

IN DISCUSSING IT'S ABILITY TO HEAR GOD'S VOICE AND FOLLOW HIS DIRECTIONS WE SEE THAT THE CHURCH IN ANTIOCH WAS IN ALIGNMENT WITH GOD'S PURPOSES

SENT OUT LEADERS

V3: Then after fasting and praying they laid their hands on them and sent them off.

HEALTHY CHURCHES MULTIPLY AND GROW.

- Fruit trees bear fruit... that contain the seeds to multiply
 - Healthy churches send out leaders to multiply the kingdom of God
- This can't happen if you don't release and send out leaders

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- In fact fruit that remains usually rots
- The Antioch church's concern was for 'will of God' AND 'the kingdom of God' and not merely their own needs/preferences.
- I'm sure, keeping Saul and Barnabas would've seemed more beneficial for them
- But they understood the principle of sending.

SENDING ALLOWS NEW LEADERS TO RISE UP

- If Saul and Barnabas stay, the next generation of leaders can't grow in their giftings and leadership

SENDING INCREASES THE FRUIT AND IMPACT OF THE SENDERS

- The church in Antioch wouldn't be able to go all over the world planting churches, but they could send Saul & Barnabas
- In effect, those new churches that are planted are in part to their sending credit.
- When we send out leaders and ministers we multiply our impact.
- On a similar note, sending missionaries is a way we can help do this.

IN DISCUSSING ITS ABILITY TO RAISE UP AND SEND OUT LEADERS WE SEE THE ANTIOCH CHURCH'S HEALTH AND GROWTH THROUGH ITS ABILITY TO MULTIPLY

RESPONSE: THE NEED IS GREAT

We're living in a day and time where the harvest is ripe, but the workers are few.

Matthew 9:37-38 *ESV*

³⁷ Then he said to his disciples, "The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few; ³⁸ therefore pray earnestly to the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into his harvest."

You don't need to be a vocational minister to live out God's purposes for your life and to make big kingdom impact.

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However, that doesn't mean that the Lord is still calling some to serve him in this way.

- Just this week we sat through a session from our district leadership painting the picture of the season we're in.
- Our ministers are aging and retiring
- The need for local pastors and global missionaries is great

Prayer:

- You would respond if the Lord is calling you
- Prepare and raise up our kids for the Lord's purposes - send them!